

June 28, 2002

Public Notice for Section 401 Water Quality Certification

**California Department of Transportation
Airport Road at Highway 101 Project**

Humboldt County

On May 22, 2002, the Regional Water Board Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received a complete application from California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) requesting Federal Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification for the Airport Road at Highway 101 Project. The application covers disturbances to waters of the United States associated with the extension of the Highway's acceleration and deceleration lanes and installation of an emergency vehicle crossover.

The proposed project is for Highway 101, Humboldt, post mile 80.1 to 81.2. The project proposes permanent closure of the existing southbound median access from Cole Avenue, constructing an emergency vehicle crossover south of Cole Avenue, and extending the Route 101 northbound and southbound acceleration and deceleration lanes at Airport Road. Installation of the emergency vehicle crossover and the extension of the acceleration/deceleration lanes will require extending pavement and fill slopes into currently unpaved median strips.

This action will impact wetlands located within the median strips. A 170-meter section of the roadside ditch leading to the man-made slough will be converted into a culvert in order to construct the northbound 101 deceleration lane for Airport Road. This will result in the loss of 0.076 acre of waters of the U.S. Additionally, waters of the U.S. will be impacted by the extension of fill slopes to accommodate wider acceleration/deceleration lanes. Widening the southbound 101 deceleration lane, widening of the acceleration lane, and installation of the emergency vehicle crossover will result in permanent impacts to wetlands within the highway median. This project will result in the permanent loss of 0.18 acre of jurisdictional wetlands.

Caltrans proposes to compensate for the loss of jurisdictional areas at a 1:1 ratio. It is Caltrans' intention to create approximately 0.08 acre of standing water to compensate for the loss of waters of the U.S. and restore 0.18 acre of freshwater wetlands to compensate for impacts to freshwater wetlands. Caltrans is proposing to use a portion of a property located at the corner of V Street and 6th Street in Eureka for the compensation plans. Caltrans will monitor success of the compensatory mitigation project.

As the lead agency for this project, the Regional Water Board has issued a Categorical Exemption under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.

Work is scheduled to occur during low-water periods, beginning in the Spring of 2003 and finishing prior to October 15, 2003. At this time, Regional Water Board staff is in the process of reviewing the proposed project for issuance of a Clean Water Act, Section 401 Water Quality Certification. The Regional Water Board will consider all comments received within the 21-day comment period that begins on the date this notice is posted. Comments on this project should be submitted to Kirsten James at jamek@rb1.swrcb.ca.gov, within 21 days of the posting of this notice.